

Watt's Happening? #136

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The Newest EV in Dawson Creek



Selah Schmaltz of Dawson Creek (originally from Sexsmith, Alberta) “really likes” her new 2018 Chevrolet Volt, a sleek rechargeable hybrid. Here she is fueling up with solar electricity from the Peace Energy Co-op Solar Recharging Station. “Kind of futuristic,” says Selah, “and lots of acceleration!”

When I arrived at work last week, I was thrilled to see a sleek new vehicle plugged into the Peace Energy Co-op electric car charging station. (The charging station provides free electric car charging from the 5,000 watt solar array on the Peace Energy building’s roof.)

A phone call later I was

happy to meet Selah Schmaltz of Dawson Creek (originally from Sexsmith, Alberta) who is the proud owner of a brand new Chevrolet Volt.

The Chevy Volt is a “rechargeable hybrid” because it can run on both pure electricity or gasoline. First it runs on electricity for the first 100 km, reports Selah,

which takes care of most of her driving. On longer trips, if she runs out of juice in the batteries, it automatically switches to the gasoline engine.

Charging stations are becoming more common, says Selah, so on a recent trip to Calgary she was on full electric for all but about 100 km, when the gas engine

kicked in. “Many businesses now offer free charging, like all Peavy Marts have chargers, so finding some free electricity isn’t hard. Out on the road, I haven’t had to pay for a charge yet.”

Selah doesn’t yet have a special charger at home, she just plugs it into a regular outlet in the evening, and its topped up by morning.

WHY THE CHEVY VOLT?

She chose the Chevrolet Volt because Brown’s Chevrolet in Dawson Creek has a certified electric car service technician, and all the staff there were very supportive and helpful. “They were almost as excited as I was about the Volt.” This was a big factor in her decision.

The other big factor was environmental. “This is my first vehicle, and I wanted it to be as green as possible. I am restructuring my life. I want to be part of the new era of renewable energy and the green economy.

“Everything we do has an impact, but I want to reduce my impact as much as possible. My mother taught me how to re-use and not waste. She always said that because our world is unfortunately all about money, and even countries are run like businesses now, the best way to have a positive impact and really make a difference is to use your money to do the right things. So that’s what I’m doing.”

FUTURISTIC

And how does she like her new purchase? “Pretty futuristic,” she says.

Like all electrics, it has fantastic acceleration, “Zero to eighty in 2 or 3 seconds. Anything you would normally do from inside the car I can now do on my

phone, like pre-warm the car and the heated seats to just the right temperature in the winter, and it has a fantastic sound system that comes with it. Read outs on the dash really help me drive more efficiently and the electric energy is usually free. There’s lots to like with the Volt.”

ARE EV’s REALLY GREEN?

Only about 15 to 20 percent of the energy in a gallon of gasoline is actually converted into motive power in a gas-powered vehicle. The rest is gobbled up by friction (especially the transmission), radiated as waste heat, and spewed out the tailpipe as poisonous pollution. So about 80 percent of the fuel you are paying for is actually wasted in a normal combustion vehicle.

The battery discharge/charge efficiency of a modern battery, on the other hand, is 80 to 95 percent, and electric motors are at least 90 percent efficient. That makes an electric car 4 to 5 times more energy efficient than a gas-powered one. That translates into a lot less pollution and much less expense to run.

When Selah is not zooming around in her Chevy Volt, she is a legal assistant at Higson Law Corp. in Dawson Creek, and is studying for her Bachelor of Applied Business majoring in pre-law.

“I’ve fallen in love with Dawson Creek,” she says. “The level of creativity here is phenomenal. I certainly intend to live here when I graduate and I want to put up my own solar array to charge my car and run my home.”

Nice to hear Selah. We like it here too, and with innovative young people like you setting an example for the rest of us, there is much to be hopeful about.

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